

Edward W. Brooke, III

United States Senator, Retired

March 21, 2007

Dear Fellow Republican:

As a proud life-long Republican, an African American, and a native Washingtonian, I was not destined to become a United States Senator when I was elected in 1966. Yet, I served with some of you as a senator from Massachusetts (1967-1979). It is the Republican Party that gave me the opportunity not only to run, but also to serve statewide in offices that even now are still rare for African Americans to achieve. The Republican Party allowed me not only to represent others. The Republican Party allowed me to be represented in the Congress of the United States. I am asking you to do the same for the tax paying citizens of my home town and to vote for passage of the District of Columbia Voting Rights Act of 2007.

Last year, I was especially proud to watch my party lead the passage of the reauthorization of the historic 1965 Voting Rights Act and to see a member of my party, Representative Tom Davis of Virginia, initiate a similar bill for the District of Columbia. Now you have before you another historic voting rights bill. At 87 years of age, I have had rare privileges and honors as an American, including the nation's highest honor generously given to me two years ago by President George Bush. At a recent press conference at the Capitol held by senators to celebrate my recently published autobiography, I learned that members of my congressional delegation and others were seeking for me the highest congressional honor, the Congressional Gold Medal. I could not help but be overwhelmed, but I had to say that as much as I would appreciate such a high honor from my peers, I would place even greater priority on a full House seat for the American citizens who live in my home town. This right for citizens of the city where I was born and raised was not achieved when I was a member of Congress. Witnessing the District of Columbia obtain the right to be represented in the House with votes cast by many Republicans would mean more to me than any honor I could achieve as an individual.

I will always be grateful to the Republican party that pressed and strongly supported my candidacies, as the nation's first Black attorney general and then as the first African American elected by popular vote to the United States Senate. Republicans were first in their willingness to break ancient barriers, in the 1960's, when Black Americans running for state wide office seemed the stuff of fantasy. I was able to run and win because the Republican Party never wavered because of my race in a state where only two percent of the residents were Black. I hope you will not hesitate now in granting my hometown a vote in the House of Representatives for the first time in the two centuries of the city's existence as our nation's capital.

The Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks, and Coretta Scott King Voting Rights Act Reauthorization and Amendments Act of 2006 and the DC House Voting Rights Act of 2007

are equivalent in their purposes and their deep meaning. Both bills are the same in extending long-denied congressional voting rights, and in the District's case, to a majority Black city as well. I grew up in the District when it was as segregated as other Southern cities, including the city's public schools, and was educated at Howard University. We had no local or federal rights, even to govern ourselves or to vote for President, and no one to represent our concerns in the Congress. I did not live elsewhere until I joined the Army and was proud to serve as a captain during WWII. The experience of living in a segregated city and of serving in our segregated Armed forces perhaps helps explain why my party's work on the Voting Rights Act reauthorization last year and on the pending D.C. House Voting Rights Act has been so important to me personally. The irony, of course, is that I had to leave my hometown to get representation in Congress and to become a Member. Nothing would mean more to me, particularly at this stage in my life, than witnessing Republicans and Democrats voting together to afford voting rights to the citizens of the District of Columbia.

H.R. 1433 has been passed twice by overwhelming majorities by the Oversight and Government Reform Committee and once by a two-to-one vote by the Judiciary Committee. I ask that you join those Republicans and Democrats in voting for H.R. 1433 on the House floor.

I am deeply grateful to you for your work and attention to voting rights for all Americans.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Ed W. Brooke". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ed" being particularly prominent.

Edward W. Brooke
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